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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001147

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. NEULING  
SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE  
ROME PLEASE PASS TO USUN ROME

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)  
SUBJECT: GOCHE TELLS AMBASSADOR HALL FOOD SITUATION IN  
HAND, AGAIN REJECTS APPEAL

REF: HARARE 000773

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Eric T Schultz under Section 1.4  
b/d

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Summary  
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[11.](#) (C) Minister of Public Service, Labor and Social Welfare Nicolas Goche told visiting USUN Rome Ambassador Hall on August 12 that Zimbabwe needed 1.2 million MT of food this year but that the GOZ had contracts for sufficient deliveries from South Africa. Ambassador Hall questioned whether the GOZ had sufficient resources to pay for the food imports and noted that the GOZ's current message would be unlikely to elicit further contributions from the U.S. or other donors. He suggested the GOZ issue a clearer statement of need. Goche categorically refused to issue such an appeal, repeating the GOZ line that donors were welcome to send aid, so long as it complemented government efforts. Goche also defended Operation Restore Order, but said it was now over. End Summary.

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Goche: &Food Is Coming8  
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[12.](#) (C) Ambassador Tony Hall and his delegation, accompanied by CDA and USAID Director, met with Minister Goche on August 12 during the Ambassador's three-day visit to assess Zimbabwe's food and humanitarian situation (Septel). Ambassador Hall noted that the number of food insecure people in the country could be as many as 5 million and asked Goche for an overview of the situation. Goche responded that an April GOZ assessment had forecast a 1.2 million MT deficit. However, the GOZ had successfully secured favorable contracts, mostly with South African suppliers, to cover the shortfall and to create a 600,000 MT strategic reserve. The minister said some logistical hurdles remained, chiefly due to the continuing fuel shortage, while shipments from Maputo were delayed due to a railway problem. He said shipments had peaked in June and then fallen off in July but that he expected total food imports would average between 80,000 and 100,000 MT per month once the transportation problems were ironed out. Goche noted that GOZ had wanted to import 35,000 MT a week of which 5,000 would go into reserves, but that had not proved feasible.

[13.](#) (C) When asked by the Ambassador whether he thought that Zimbabweans were in good shape, the minister replied affirmatively. Ambassador Hall responded that he had spent that morning at Hatcliffe Farm where he had met with victims of Operation Restore Order. These people were hungry now and had asked for food and blankets. Zimbabwe had visibly declined economically since his last visit in 2002 and Ambassador Hall questioned whether the GOZ had adequate resources to pay for the imports. Goche responded that the GOZ would get the necessary funds as it was the government's &first responsibility8 to feed its people.

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Flatly Rejects Aid Appeal  
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[14.](#) (C) Ambassador Hall said he would report back to Washington and Rome that the GOZ felt it had the food situation under control. He said he hoped that this was really the case as the GOZ message was not one that would likely elicit further food donations. A clear statement of need would better serve the interests of the Zimbabwean people. Goche told the Ambassador that he did not have the authority to write a formal request and would not do so, &just as simple as that.8 He said he resented the implication that outsiders cared more for the Zimbabwean people than their own government and added that the GOZ was well aware it was not the &darling8 of the international community.

[15.](#) (C) Goche said foreign assistance efforts must complement GOZ initiatives, - the other way around.8 To this end,

the minister said the GOZ would welcome assistance from those with goodwill.<sup>8</sup> Ambassador Hall said it seemed that donors had to beg the GOZ to let them help the Zimbabwean people. The Charge added that the U.S. was committed to helping feed the Zimbabwean people but warned that if food imports began to lag it would take several months at least or U.S. food assistance to reach Zimbabwe.

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NGO Efforts Not Being Impeded  
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16. (C) Ambassador Hall raised reports that the government was preventing NGOs from importing and distributing food aid. Goche responded that the reports were inaccurate. He said there was only one South African NGO that had been delayed because it had only recently applied for an import permit, which his ministry was in the process of providing. Goche asked for formal notification of such problems and said that his ministry would look into them. He added that the GOZ and WFP were in the process of concluding an MOU that would govern UN activities.

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Says Restore Order Over, New Homes Being Built  
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17. (C) Goche raised Operation Restore Order at the end of the meeting, saying that it had restored law and order to Zimbabwean cities. He now felt safe enough to drive his car to work in downtown Harare. Responding to Ambassador Hall's question regarding the status of the Operation, Goche said it was over, save for those areas where people had returned to illegal activities.<sup>8</sup> The minister highlighted Operation Garikai, the government plan to build homes for those displaced, claiming that 29 new homes were being built every two days. Nine teams, each headed by a minister, had been created to oversee rebuilding in various parts of the country. Goche reported that he was very satisfied with process in Bulawayo, the area for which he is responsible.

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Comment  
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18. (C) After the meeting with Goche, Ambassador Hall said it was as difficult a meeting as many he had in North Korea. Despite Hall's humanitarian mission, Goche was defensive and hostile, in marked contrast to his cordial meeting with Ambassador Dell last May on the same subject (Reftel). The change in tone would seem to be further proof that the international outcry over Operation Restore Order and especially the UN report, have hit the GOZ hard. Based on Goche's response to Ambassador Hall, there appears to be virtually no chance that the GOZ will come clean about its food needs and issue a clear statement. In the absence of such a statement, we and other donors will have to continue to support the Zimbabwean people indirectly, through the WFP regional appeal or through support to local and regional NGOs.

19. (U) USUN Rome cleared this message.  
SCHULTZ